

Hobbies

Coin lovers can design a place for themselves in posterity

By Roger Boye

Uncle Sam has unveiled yet another coin-design contest that includes \$15,000 in prizes and long-lasting metallic fame for the winners.

Under contest rules, any person of any age can submit up to six designs for the James Madison/Bill of Rights commemorative coins to be made next year—a "heads" and "tails" drawing for each of the three coin types. Winning artists will get \$2,500 per design selected, and their initials will adorn the coin they

helped to create.

Officials say that simplicity is desired in all designs, with judging to be based on theme, symbolism and marketability, among other things.

The design for the commemorative silver dollar should depict President James Madison on one side and his home, Montpelier, on the other. The half dollar and \$5 gold piece must be "emblematic of the first 10 amendments of the Constitution."

A similar competition was used last year in developing designs for

three 1992-dated Olympic coins. Critics have praised the Olympic motifs for their beauty and originality, which may help boost coin sales this summer.

Some hobbyists complain that other recent commemoratives are poorly done, the result of tight deadlines and competitions open only to government artists. Winners in the latest nationwide contest will be selected by the secretary of the Treasury based on recommendations of experts from the Smithsonian Institution, U.S. Mint and elsewhere.

Contest guidelines are available

from William F. Daddio at (202) 874-6020 or Brenda F. Gatling at (202) 874-6010 at the U.S. Mint. Deadline for receipt of entries is Aug. 31.

President Bush signed legislation in May that authorizes production of the Madison/Bill of Rights coins.

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A House committee has approved production of 16 coin types to honor the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta despite pleas from some hobby experts that collectors would shun so many new issues.

Coin World editor Beth Deisher said in a statement to the subcommittee that the Olympic proposal was "seriously

flawed" and "highly unlikely" to net \$100 million for the staging of the games and the training of U.S. athletes.

"Market success is attained by producing quality products at reasonable prices that consumers want to buy," Deisher told Congress. The Olympic proposal is based on "the fantasy that just because the U.S. Mint produces coins, consumers will buy them."

The committee also approved commemorative programs to mark U.S. participation in World War II and to help raise money for the preservation of Civil War battlefields.

Also, a bill in Congress calls for a silver dollar marking the 10th anniversary of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington.